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E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: LETTER FROM UN SECRETARY-GENERAL BAN KI-MOON
REGARDING POSSIBLE CANDIDATES FOR HIGH-COMMISSIONER FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS POST.

¶1. Action requested: On April 3, 2008, Ambassador Khalilzad received the following letter dated March 24, 2008 from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. Please provide guidance in

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responding no later than April 14, 2008.

Begin Text:

¶2. Excellency,

As you know, the post of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights will be vacant as of 1 July 2008. I am eager to fill this post in a timely manner, but also to be sure that I have found the best person for one of the more important jobs in the United Nations system. I can only be sure of finding such a person if the best qualified candidates come forward for consideration, and are judged against rigorous selection criteria. With this in mind, I have decided to establish a selection panel to be chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General.

I am writing to seek your help in this search. I should be grateful if you would inform your Government that I would welcome suggestions of possible candidates. I am drawing up a short list from which I shall, on the basis of a rigorous interview procedure as well as consultations with the human rights support community, select the person to be nominated for approval as United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights by the General Assembly, as mandated by General Assembly resolution 48/141 of 20 December 1993.

You may wish in conveying this information, to highlight the candidates' profile that I shall be considering to identify the exceptional leader I wish to nominate as High Commissioner for Human Rights.

First, I believe the new High Commissioner must be a person of unimpeachable personal and professional integrity, with strong diplomatic and political skills. He or she must be able to provide strong leadership to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights(OHCHR) and advocacy for the respect of human rights worldwide, before Member States, both developed and developing, and in international fora, both intergovernmental and non-governmental. He or she will need vision, and must be good at working with people of diverse backgrounds and opinions, not only within OHCHR and the wider UN system but also in civil society organizations and Governments worldwide, so as to lead the overall global effort to protect and promote human rights.

Second, I believe the High Commissioner for Human Rights needs an extensive knowledge of human rights issues, derived from experience of leadership in an academic, governmental, intergovernmental and/or non-governmental setting.

Third, I shall be looking for candidates with proven skills in the management of complex organizations, who will show imagination in finding new ways to work with the Human Rights Council to uphold fundamental principles in a rapidly changing political, economic and social environment. For this purpose, I would seek candidates with a good knowledge of the United Nations system and commitment to the pursuit of reform.

Fourth, I expect a leader who will unflinchingly champion the cause of respect for human rights and will have the communication and coalition-building skills to create consensus, and stimulate effective campaigns among a broad spectrum of people and organizations, on the main human rights issues of our time.

Finally, fluency in English or French is required. Fluency in the other language is highly desirable and knowledge of another official United Nations language is an asset.

So that I can move the process forward as fast as possible, I should be grateful if Member States would inform me of candidates by 15 April 2008.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration. Ban Ki-moon.

KHALILZAD